

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SAN SA 02166 302106Z

13

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CU-04 OPR-02 SY-04 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01

PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 AID-20 COME-00 EB-11

FRB-02 TRSE-00 XMB-07 OPIC-12 CIEP-02 LAB-06 SIL-01

OMB-01 DRC-01 /168 W

----- 091254

R 302030Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5598

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 2166

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PINT, ELAB, ETRN, ES

SUBJ: CONTINUED UNREST OVER INFLATION, BUS FAIRE INCREASE

REF: SAN SALVADOR 2022

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

1. PROTESTS CONTINUE AGAINST RISING COST OF LIVING AND FIFTY PERCENT RISE IN BUS FARES. VANDALISM OF BUSES HAS BEEN REPORTED AND ON MAY 24 A BUS WAS GUTTED BY A FIRE BOMB IN SONSONATE. ON MAY 29, UNIVERSITY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS RESUMED THEIR DEMONSTRATIONS WITH A GENERALLY PEACEFUL MORNING MARCH THROUGH DOWNTOWN STREETS CALLING FOR WAGE INCREASES "FOR THEIR PARENTS", BUS FARE ROLLBACK AND UNSPECIFIED ANTI-INFLATIONARY MEASURES. IN MID-AFTERNOON, SOME 400 STUDENTS PARADED BY EMBASSY ENROUTE FROM THE UNIVERSITY TO DOWNTOWN AREA. TWO HOURS LATER ABOUT ONE QUARTER

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PAGE 02 SAN SA 02166 302106Z

OF THEM RETURNED, SOAKED BY TORRENTIAL RAIN, AND PAUSED IN FRONT

OF EMBASSY. WITH MORE PERSEVERANCE THAN ORIGINALITY. THEY CHANTED "CUBA, SI; YANQUI, NO" AND "DOWN WITH NORTH AMERICAN IMPERIALISM". BRIEF ROCK THROWING INCIDENT ENSUED, RESULTING IN TWO EMBASSY WINDOWS AND AN EXTERIOR LIGHT BROKEN. THEY REPORTEDLY ALSO BROKE WINDOWS AT NATIONAL PALACE AS WELL AS AT SEVERAL COMMERCIAL ESTABLISHMENTS ALONG THEIR ROUTE. VIOLENCE CONTINUED ON MAY 30 WHEN ACCORDING TO PRESS, EIGHT ARMED ATTACKERS FIREBOMBED TWO BUSES IN SAN SALVADOR, CAUSING CONSIDERABLE DAMAGE.

2. WHEN SEVERAL HUNDRED HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS MARCHED ON CASA PRESIDENCIAL ON MAY 20, PRES MOPINA AGREED ON THE SPOT TO ASK BUS OWNERS TO ACCEPT A FARE ROLLBACK FOR PRIMARY AND SECONDARY STUDENTS. THE MEASURE, WHICH WOULD AFFECT ABOUT 40,000 STUDENTS IN SAN SALVADOR, SANTA ANA, AND SAN MIGUEL, WILL REPORTEDLY GO INTO EFFECT ON JUNE 3. BUS DRIVERS HAVE ALREADY ANNOUNCED THEIR OPPOSITION TO DUAL FARES.

3. COMMENT: MOLINA'S QUICK ACQUIESCENCE IN STUDENT'S DEMAND FOR FARE REDUCTION FAILED TO ACHIEVE THE GOVT'S APPARENT INTENTION OF DIVIDING ITS OPPOSITION ON INFLATION ISSUES BY REDUCING STUDENT SUPPORT. THE MAY 29 ACTS OF VIOLENCE, WHILE RELATIVELY MINOR, WERE FIRST UNTOWARD INCIDENTS IN SERIES OF PROTESTS SINCE MAY DAY. IT SEEMS PROBABLE THAT, IF STUDENT ROWDYISM CONTINUES, THE GOVT WILL TAKE FORCEFUL MEASURES TO CONTAIN IT.
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